

1965: 'Bravo' - do



In continuation of the mini-series **Battlefield Tales**, **Sagat Shaunik** brings for the first time, a narrative history with battle-accounts from a leading tank commander and his Sqn Commander juxtaposed as living history of 'B' Squadron, 62 CAVALRY during the 1965 War. "Lessons learnt were that we had superior crew integration and training. Credit goes entirely to unsung heroes like each member of my Squadron, especially our tank-gunned who held their nerve and shot those Pattons with great skill and determination. Knowing we were thoroughly out-gunned, they sat in their battle positions and waited for the right moment to engage the Sherman's trigger. All my troop leaders were wounded in battle or otherwise..." recalled Maj Gen KMKS Barach who commanded the Sqn during the war. It has been 51 years since the battle was fought, but men like Hon'ble Capt OP Prakash Kadian of Sixty Second Cavalry live on with individual, unsung, brave histories as the first Indian Armoured Regiment to be raised post-independence.

Then - ALD Om Prakash Kadian [Retired Risaldar (Hon'ble Captain)] Leading Tank Commander's Experience:

I was born in Tehsil Beri, Zilla Rohtak (now Jhajjar). I was a sportsman in school and thought that I would receive more opportunities in the Army. In those days my Jat community didn't do business, we either farmed or joined the Army. My father Daryao Singh (rank unknown) served in Peshawar with 15 Punjab and was discharged after WW II, following his footsteps, I attended a recruitment rally at Delhi Cantonment. In 1958, I was enrolled in the Armoured Corps and assigned 62 Cavalry located at Ferozepur.

"Bharat ki pehli cav-lury unit thi jo without ghode raste hui, Ambala 1956 mein, Lt Col RS Butalia ki kamaan mein" (It was the first Indian Cavalry Regiment to be raised without horses, directly on tanks at Ambala in 1956; under the command of Lt Col RS Butalia). We had Churchill Tanks named after the British PM and we moved to Jalandhar in 1959. By June 1960, we deposited those Churchills and converted to Sherman Mark IV and V's, these were American

equipment with 76 mm calibre guns. 'A' and 'B' Squadrons (Sqns) had Sherman Mk V while 'C' Sqn had Mk IV. In May/June 1964 we moved to Jammu.

Our tank crew lists were regularly updated based on training and availability. In 1965, I was with B Sqn 3rd Troop with tank number 1 GX51. Our battle crew were gunner Sowar Ram Singh (retired Risaldar); Driver Sow Khushi Ram; Operator/Loader Sow Mange Ram and I was the tank commander with Acting Lance Daffadar (ALD) rank. Usually, an ALD is never allowed to command a tank in war, but being a sportsman playing Regimental teams I was noticed and with the shortage of crews, was privileged to be handpicked and given command of that tank.

Bravo Sqn's leadership were: Sqn Cdr Maj Kanwar Maharaja Kumar Singh Barach (retired Maj Gen); Sqn z/C Capt Kulwant Singh (retired Maj Gen, UYSM); Troop (Tp) Leaders, No 1 Tp Nb Ris Shyam Lal, No 2 Tp Nb Ris Sultan Singh, No 3 Tp Senior JCO Ris Fateh Singh, No 4 Tp Nb Ris Shodan Singh, SDM (Squadron Daffadar Major) Kali Ram; SQMD (Squadron Quarter Master Daffadar) Gugan Singh and Squadron Signal

*PHOTO CAPTION: B Sqn 62 Cavalry on top of destroyed Pakistani Patton M 48 tank. Top Right: 50 years commemorative coin. Below Maj Gen KMKS Barach (left) and Hon'ble Capt OP Kadian (right).

NCO Attar Singh.

Just like we had supported the Mukti Bahini in 1971, Pakistan had sent soldiers in civilian dress during 1965 to operate behind our lines in J&K. The Regiment was alerted and 'B' Sqn was sent to Jammu Tawi's railway station that was surrounded by jungle. We guarded the jungles against Pak infiltration for 20 days. The other two Sqns were deployed towards Ranbir Singh Pura (RS Pura) on the road towards Sialkot. It was around May 1965 when, "ek dum aise ho gaya tha ki hogni padhta tha, jab bataya jata ki ghusbaithiye aa gaye hain" (we had to suddenly rush to the locations, when we were informed that the infiltrators had crossed in). On 2 September, they finally attacked us with airstrafing.

We were tasked to commence attack on Sialkot from Samba sector, while 20 Lancers was despatched to Chhamb-Jaurian and 18 CAV (Shermans) was allotted Sialkot-Jammu road in the general area of RS Pura. Later, 62 CAV (Shermans) was detailed to protect 1st Armoured Division's right flank and 2nd LANCERS (Shermans) would protect the Div's left flank. 18 CAV was tasked to hold the region of RS Pura. 16 CAV (Centurions) the advance guard of the Div's assault were to remain in contact with the enemy to ascertain their positions, equipment status, armour deployment and soon. 16 CAV was tasked to engage in small battles and mine-clearance at Regimental level wherever necessary.

It so happened that when the Div pressed on with the assault, Sqn of 2 LANCERS got bogged down in a nallah (ditch). So 'C' Sqn 62 CAV filled their strength to form the Div's left-defensive flank, both Regiments were reduced to '1' status. Our 'A' Sqn commanded by Maj BIS Khurana would advance one day and on the next day our 'B' Sqn would replace his position. In a combing manner, we reached unopposed till the area outside Maharajke, a small town of sorts. Pakistani village Chawinda was just a km ahead of the international border and an advance party of Pak sappers/pioneers had arrived in a truck to lay mines. Our arty opened up on them at 11 pm on night 6/7 September. They halted their mine laying and fled leaving behind their dead and wounded. My Sqn recovered their wounded; there was no fighting for us, we remained in Maharajke for the night.

On 11 Sep, we were tasked to capture village Haral. Regiment was told that the advance guard had crossed the Div's limit-lines as they had been unopposed right up to Sialkot. Enemy armoured brigade dug in at Sialkot, engaged the advance guard with superior Patton tanks. So they commenced a tactical withdrawal. In the dust that lifted, we didn't know if the

tanks manoeuvring ahead of us were Pattons or Centurions.

B Sqn had been deployed in up-front formation with 2-Tp on the right and my 3-Tp on the left. By 100 hrs, we were halted as arrangements were made to replenish petrol and ammunition as we had been firing for two days. My tank was the first on the front left extreme of 3rd Tp. The advance guard was retreating and came over from my side with a Pak armoured Sqn chasing behind them.

Seeing my troop, the advance guard first went behind our rear troop, turned about and then faced Pakistan. Our troop received orders not to fire when we reported sighting tanks approaching our position. We were informed that they were our tanks. When they came closer, we recognised them and alerted our Sqn Cdr who repeated not to fire at them. I was ordered to show a white flag and ensure that my gunner doesn't pull the trigger. But I didn't have any white flag or cloth. So I took off my dungarees and removed my baniyan (vest) and raised it.

At about 500-600 gaz (yards), Pak Tanks came and halted just ahead of us. They were facing all directions. We were waving white flags. They saw us and got confused. Then the Advance Guard came up front from behind my position and fired at them. Enemy returned fire, so the Advance Guard withdrew promptly. But, we still didn't fire. For 20 minutes both of us went silent. I was left standing waving my baniyan-flag.

By then, they had recognised us and fired at my tank. The round fell 50-60 gaz ahead of my tank. When that fell, I ordered my crew in to fighting position. I informed my Sqn Cdr that they were not our tanks; they were the enemy's! Still he did not give any fire order. Regardless, we went in to battle position. "Itne mein doosre gola aa gaya aur Kikar ped se lay gaya" (meanwhile a second round hit the Kikar (Acacia Karoo) tree next to us). The falling branch made me realise that the next round would be killing us. Luckily, the third round came and hit my left sprocket and bounced off. "Wo ricochet karke nikal gaya" (it ricocheted and didn't penetrate further).

"Phir hamne fire shuru kar deya. Ko i order shorder nahi. Maine apna cupola band kar deya tha. Pak ka tank broadside disha mein dikh gaya toh maine uspe hamla kerne ka order deya. Mera gunner Ram Singh ne theek uske petrol tank pe nishaan-cheeri lagaya aur unke tank mein aag lag gayi. Fir meine doosre tank k engine deck mein bhi hit keyya. Itne mein Pak ka wo 15 tanko ka battle group darr gaya aur about-turned hua. Pehle unke kamaan tank ghoorna, phir sabhi ghoorn gaye. Phir hamne trigger ko dabba deya aur do tanko

aur hit hue. Ek jal gaya aur ek thamb ho gaya. Tab tak Pak withdraw kar gaya, 11 bajje kee yeh kaarwai surya-ast hone tak chalti rahi. Hum aat-sun khutum hee keeye k donb aur key art-lury shuru ho gayi. Phir toh bahut hee bura ho gaya'.

(Then without any orders, we commenced firing. I shut my cupola and saw a Pak tank on its broadside. I ordered my gunner Ram Singh to fire at him. Promptly he placed the crosshairs and hit the petrol tank that set ablaze. Then we fired at another tank, hitting it in the engine deck. By then, the Pak tank battle group of 13 got scared and turned about. First their command tank turned around and then all of them did. So my gunner pressed the trigger and hit two more tanks, one burnt and another stalled there. Pak had withdrawn, the action that started around 11 am ended at sunset when both sides' artilleries opened up on each other, making it a terrible situation).

That night, we were ordered to outflank Haral from the rear. My tank track was broken; its battery was weak and it just didn't start. We had a small generator mounted on the tank, but even that couldn't give a combined battery start. I used what was taught during training that if we could hold one track's stick in neutral then we could turn about and withdraw our tank. But the engine just didn't crank up. I ordered my loader Mange Ram to remove the 'ack-ack' MG (Machine Gun) from his cupola ("jo Browning-e tank-o mein hoti hain") and we dismounted to take shelter in a pit nearby. We deployed the MG in defensive position, ab Pistol-o se koun lodhe? (Who would fight with pistols?)

When dust settled, we found ourselves isolated. Then I went back inside the tank, placed grenades and explosive charges in their designated positions near the radio, gun-breach and ammunition deck. Setting the primer, I ran away from the tank, dived in to the pit and detonated the charge. We were ready to lose our tank but didn't want it to be misused by the enemy either against us or as a war trophy in their cantonments. As night fell, we began withdrawing from our position and reached a sort of embankment where we found a Jeep with Indian-marking. We looked around and noticed a tree and approached it seeking possible assistance. There our arty FOO (Forward Observation Officer) was perched and alerted, 'yeha mat aao, mein dikh jaunga' (don't come here, I will be spotted). So we went behind his jeep and oriented ourselves as per small maps taken from the tank.

Just a little ahead, we found B Sqn Sherman Mk IV "GX50", the troop leader's tank that had fallen in to a well. Its main gun had prevented it from going in completely and was bent. That tank's commander Ris

Fateh Singh had been wounded in the shelling as his cupola hit him on the head. Luckily our CO, Lt Col BM Singh arrived on his tank. I briefed him about the situation and requested if Fateh Saab's tank could be recovered. He told us that there was no way to recover the tank and it would be of no use since the barrel was bent. So I took permission to destroy it. He granted it, so we repeated the procedure that we had done with my tank. But it didn't destroy sufficiently. So I requested the Commandant to dismount his tank, then got in, turned the main gun and fired a single round in to the engine deck of our Saab's tank stuck in the well. That completed our drill for war-damaged tanks. I fulfilled my responsibilities as an NCO of 3rd troop.

We had lost our Troop Leaders tank and our own. The third tank of our troop, Sherman Mk IV "GX52" location was still unknown, our CO ordered us on a search mission. We proceeded on the main road and found some infantry just a little ahead. They told us that the tank had recently moved towards the Regiment's location. Now, we were without any transport and had to march back to our location. We saw a truck going down the road and tried to halt him. He slowed down, we tossed in our carbines, just then he accelerated. We got worried that we would be without transport and our personal weapons in enemy territory. Being an athlete, I sprinted behind him and caught hold of the tailboard. Then I moved the small window in the driver's cabin and prodded the driver. He got alarmed and pressed the accelerator. Perhaps he assumed I was Pakistani. Then somehow I conveyed to him that we were from the same army. Then he stopped his truck and my crew boarded. Later, at the Unit lines, he told us that he thought we were Pakis and slowed down only because of the rough road, speeding at the next opportunity. He apologized telling us that he was recruited just 3 months ago. We forgave him instantly.

Then my crew was assigned administrative duties and we recovered all Pak tanks that we had destroyed. The Pak tank that had stalled after being hit by my tank was fully functional. Div took it for technical studies; in fact some American groups later came down to study how an inferior American Sherman Mk IV could take on the supposedly superior American M-48 Patton! I had driven that Patton back to India and the odometer read barely 100 kms. Pakis just didn't spend time to train their crews on brand new tanks and mistakenly thought that they would take on my brothers of 62 CAVALRY! The other three destroyed Patton tanks were retained as war-relics with the Divisions at Jammu, Ambala and

Ahmednagar Centre. My life carried on and I retired as an Honorary Captain. To know more about the Sqn you must meet my wartime Sqn Cdr, Gen Barachsahib.

Then-Maj Kunwar Maharaaja Kumar Singh Barach (Retired Maj Gen), B Sqn Cdr recalls:

65 War was started by the Pakistanis in J&K area. They had achieved superiority over Indian Army in terms of modernisation of their army. They had received M-47, M-48 Patton tanks for 8 regiments as also some M-36 Tank Destroyers that had the same gun but not mounted on the same chassis. Also, they got other sophisticated equipment and thought that it was the best chance for them to annex parts of Kashmir, if not the whole of Kashmir and they started the problem there. Now when they started that, the Army Chief Gen Choudhary went up to the Prime Minister to say, *"Look, in the hills we got no reinforcements, the only way we can reduce pressure, is to open a new frontier for which we will have to violate the international border"*; Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri replied, "You are the expert on the thing, I have no objections, you can do what you like, but ensure the safety and security of the country".

So he planned an attack into Lahore sector and drew the enemy there, he launched our only Armoured Division (Armd Div) that had four Centurion Regiments. The Centurion tank was not as modern or sophisticated as the Pattons. The British tank was an end of World War 2 design with very simple-effective gunnery techniques of engaging targets. On the other hand the Pakistani Army was unable to absorb modern hardware when the war started, because their rank & files were not trained and most of them were still uneducated or had a very primary level of education. Whereas our crews were very proficient in the Regiment. We had a simple drill of firing three shots after locating the target, it just made a guess if the target was 1000 or 1200 yards. Fired one shot- up 200, fire another shot-down 400 fired another shot. At 800 up to 2000, you would definitely hit a target, maybe two rounds would hit and it did happen that way. But they (Pak) had more powerful guns. We had 20 pds (83.4mm), they had 90 mm guns that were more sophisticated. At the time, the Army Chief ordered launching 1 Armoured Div through Samba area, go as far in to Pagowal and further up. We did not know what his intended target was; all we knew was that the Armd Div would drive the main offense.

The Chief achieved tactical superiority by suddenly launching his entire Armd Div from Ambala to catch Pakistanis by surprise in Samba area of J&K.

Much against the resistance of GOC Armd Div and his staff, when the Armd Div began moving, Chief decided that one Regiment would be left behind in Punjab for securing the border. 3rd Cavalry was asked to stay back. The Div was left with only three Armoured Regiments to hold J&K. The breakout was to start from Samba through a bridgehead made by 6 Mtn Div, then commanded by Maj Gen SK Korla, DSO, MC.

Before operations started, 62 Cavalry less one Sqn was placed under 6 Mtn Div to support them in securing the bridgehead and enlarging it. The bridgehead was being made between Maharajke and Charwa. On night of D-Day, we were placed under command 1 Corps. 'C' Squadron 62 Cav was placed under command 1st Armd Div to protect their left flank. The other two Squadrons were on the right flank where I was privileged to lead 'B' Squadron in to battle. Our initial attacks were successful as there were hardly any enemy in the area. They were in the process of marking and laying down mines, but before they could do anything, we were pressed in to service! We helped 6 Mtn Div to successfully secure the bridgehead and widen it. The Armd Div broke out from there. We went on the road from Samba (India) to Charwa (Pakistan) and then on to Kaloi and finally Pagowal.

'C' Sqn could not penetrate properly in the sense that communications were fragile and there was some infantry in supportive role with them who had dug-in by night and slowed them further. By night in Chawinda, they were given the targets but the infantry never joined up with them. The Sqn was ordered to fall back as calls to the infantry Colonel were not answered. There were elements of enemy artillery positioned there, and the Sqn destroyed half a battery before falling back. Once you start moving back, it becomes difficult to stop the troops, the Sqn was coming back to the same place where it had started, unfortunately it so happened that the Armd Div's Arty Brigade had occupied it. When the Gunners saw tanks approaching from the enemy side, they assumed it was the enemy, so they hit a couple of tanks (own), but no serious damage happened. The tanks returned fire and destroyed one or two of their guns too!

The Brigade Commander, based on reports of that Arty Bde and some report from 2nd LANCERS who were also placed under their command, said that two Patton tank regiments were moving in the area. *"Jadd tank-o move kards ne, ta dust hundee aiyr"* (when tanks move, a lot of dust is lifted), so he thought that some Armd Div had come and ordered all Regiments to fall back and make a hollow square. They wasted two three days there, but there was no enemy in the

area. Indian Army lost total surprise by wasting 2/3 days in area Philoura (Pakistan) where the main battle took place. On the third day when they began advancing ahead of Philoura, they found some troop there and suffered casualties. A few Pattons were also destroyed in the face to face fighting that ensued.

We, 62 CAV (A & B Sqn) were advancing on the right flank at the same time. On the next day, we were placed under 43 Lorried Brigade of Armd Div. We reached Philoura that was almost on the flank of 'C' Sqn that had already gone there. We suggested to the Armd Div that they pull back from there and move towards our side where we would protect their right flank by first light. Next morning, Pakistanis were found in their same place thinking only C Sqn would hit them as it was. They were caught by surprise when they found our new formation and both sides suffered very heavy losses. 30-40 or more Patton Tanks were destroyed that day!

The next morning, we were asked to advance to Pagowal. We observed that from flank on right side, there was a road emerging close from Sialkot-Philoura that crossed behind Pagowal where we were standing nearby and saw Patton tanks coming from that side. Not more than 2/3000 yards ahead, we hit the markings of a minefield and stopped, we didn't know if it was mined or not. I reported the matter to my CO Lt Col BM Singh, that there were Patton tanks approaching and we hit the minefield. Somehow, he did not reply so I repeated the transmission after 5 minutes passed. Then another 5 minutes later, I got a call from GOC 1 Armd Div who was listening in to the Regimental Nets of everyone in the battle. He said, "Look I am Tiger so-&-so Division, we have already identified all Patton Regiments that the Pakistanis have. There can be no Patton Regiments here. What could be there is that we have lost contact with one Sqn of 16 Cavalry, perhaps they may be roaming around in this area so please don't fire at them".

I responded, "We are so close, we can't make a mistake". He replied, "Alright then show them a white flag" to which, I replied, "No, I don't have any white flag". So he said, "Put a bloody towel up or something!"

The Pattons were getting closer and closer. So I ordered my men, "don't fire unless these tanks are within a 1000 yards". We had only Sherman Mk IV, the best tank amongst the Sherman tanks. It had a very powerful tracer that you could see from the time it left the barrel until it hit the ground or the target. Its 76 mm gun was more powerful than the previous 75 mm that had been used earlier, but nothing in front of Pattons, my squadron was made to hold steady. The enemy got within 1000-1200 yards of my tank-troop

that had been up front at the farthest. The enemy faced them on the broadside and hit my leading tank troop. The tank driver came on the Net and stated "Saab, aap toh marw doge, fire karne ki yaqarat do" (Sir, you will get us all killed, give us permission to fire). The moment I said fire, all four tanks opened up their main guns. Two Pattons were hit and both caught fire. The trooper leader had already given fire orders! Then we saw the entire lot of Pattons about turn and abandon the battlefield. About 2-3 days later, during recovery operations, we discovered a fully operational Patton that had been hit by our leading tank in that area.

On that evening, the enemy attempted to dislodge us by a failed counter-attack. The GOC Armd Div came down to see us. He remarked, "Look I know your tanks (Shermans) are inferior (to Pattons), I will send you a troop (Centurions) from my HQs, and they will join you and fight along with you." I accepted his offer and they were promptly placed under my command. He further remarked, "You will harbour here, but you will not pull back, even if you are decimated, we will not pull back from here". I replied, "Alright, don't worry, we will hold this area". The counter attack had been half-hearted and naturally fizzled out.

(According to Regimental Records, Capt KPS Sidhu (Retd Brig) of 62 CAV was the GSO 3 (operations) of the Div at that time. He was the trooper leader of GOC's Centurion tanks and earned a Mention-in-despatches for his role in the subsequent action)

Strangely, that night when our rear-echelon fetched up with fuel, ammunition, food etc., the Senior JCO came and apprised me, "Saab wo Risaldar Sahib aur RDM lekte hain ki AP ammunition of Sherman Mk IV ka available nahi hain. HE wa le aye hain" [Sir, our Risaldar Sahib and Regimental Daffadar Major inform us that we have no Armour Piercing (AP) Ammunition for our Sherman Mk IVs. They have only brought High Explosive (HE) rounds]. So I said, "In that case, go to every tank and find out how many AP rounds have been fired and redistribute them equally amongst every tank". He informed that we had about 50% of AP ammunition! Then I informed GSO-1 Armd Div that, "A JCO had been to all the ammunition points in the rear area, none of them have AP ammunition of Sherman Mk IV, they have only HE with them". He confirmed that 'it was a very serious matter' and assured that he would get in touch with Army HQs. He was resourceful and immediately rang up A.H.Q. "By early next morning, a helicopter was flown to our area and AP rounds were delivered to us on the spot". We spent the day in replenishment of fuel, ammunition and maintenance.

By nightfall we had tanks approaching us, we

thought another counter-attack was going to take place. The alerted Sqn took up battle positions. During our advance we had picked up a JCO who was recovering a disabled Patton tank that stopped moving midway and he was standing just there. He joined us with the Light Repair Vehicle after fixing the broken track of the Patton. He walked up to me, saluted and remarked, "Saab, yeh aawaz jo hain, yeh toh Centurion tank k hain" (Sir, sounds like Centurions are approaching us). So I asked him, "yeh aapko kaise pata?" (How would you know that?). To which he replied, "Saab, yeh aawaz jo hain, wo kissi bhi tank mein nahi, yeh kewal Centurion tank k hee hain" (Sir, this sound belongs to only Centurion tanks). I accepted his suggestion and asked him to move up with me in my rover. As we inched closer, he confirmed, "Saab, 100% yeh Centurion hain!" (Sir, 100% these are Centurions).

At about 50 yards or more they came, and halted in front of us. Commandant 16 CAV was an old friend from 9 (DECCAN) HORSE. He dismounted from the leading tank, came up to me and asked, "Who are you?" I said, "We are The Grand CAVALRY!" He replied, "Phew, thank God! I thought we hit a Pakistani汇报". I replied, "We have taken their positions". It was just good luck that neither side got excited. Had somebody opened fire, we would have been annihilated. Then he informed me that for three days they had not seen any food, water or rest, and if we could provide anything, it would be most useful. I ordered the necessary arrangements and his men rested well.

Around midnight, I got a call from CO Light Regiment, who conveyed that 4 MADRAS had been given a task to capture Pagowal crossroad and we were to support them. He gave me their coordinates and asked me to link up with them and be briefed on the task ahead. I tasked my a/c to assemble the Sqn and I got in to my rover and moved ahead to link up with CO 4 MADRAS. Initially he was very happy to receive me, I asked him, "What are your plans?" He said, "I have been given this task, our plan is very simple, you see this road/track going to Pagowal, we will advance like that and capture this village in Phase 1 and next morning we capture the crossroad".

I inquired, "Have you done any patrolling in this area?" He said, "No we have just been given this task and come here". "What is the information about enemy in this area?" He said, "None". Then I remarked, "How can you go in this area? I will give you information. This place is held. There is also marking of a minefield, we had a tank engagement in this area, just the day before yesterday". Then he asked, "Now what do I do?" I said "Instead of your planned route, we will go 2-3 kms to the

right, advance and hit the road from Sialkot going to the crossroad behind the village, advance along that, capture the village in Phase 1 and post first light we capture the crossroad". He said, "No, No, No; it can't be done, I have already issued my orders, I can't change them!"

Then he picked up his radio to speak with his Brigade Commander Brig Eric A Vas (Retd Lt Gen), who was an intellectual kind of person. He told him, "This Sqn Cdr arrived and as usual he is very uncooperative". Brig Vas said, "What is the problem? Put him on the line". I told him "Having spoken to the CO, their plan is entirely based on a map study, they have not been out on patrols as they were tasked just this evening, and they don't have any information about enemy whereabouts. I have been here for two days and we had engagements with enemy tanks in this area, we have also drawn enemy automatic fire from the village. This place is held by anything up to a Company of Infantry. It has transpired that the CO has been told that the village was a humble patrol base or something at most a Platoon. I know this place; I can help him and lead him. But I can't get in to the village where the infantry will go. But I can support from behind. Once they lose their tail, we can cut them off and they will lose their balance".

The Brig made me hold the line. After 5 mins, he told me that he understood what I had said and asked for CO infantry to speak to him. The Brigadier told him, "This Sqn Cdr engaged the enemy yesterday and destroyed Patton tanks. I think the plan he is giving off is a very solid plan".

Then the problem of Command-chain happened. The CO agreed with me in principle but found it difficult to re-issue orders down to the section level where changed objectives and so on had to be shown... H-Hour had been fixed at 0400 hrs. It was getting late. The fire plan, fire support base everything had to be changed. Company commanders further refused to change anything. Finally with great difficulty, one Company was assigned to me. I told them that they could mount our tanks and ride piggyback up to the battlefield. They said that they were not trained to do that and didn't have any gloves to hold the rope line. They were ready to jog behind our tanks. I was in no mood to get in to arguments during war, so I offered the Company Cdr to sit inside my tank along with his wireless set, so that his troops kept pace with us.

Next morning, we commenced advance at 0600 hrs. Pakis were taken completely by surprise. There was a tank troop in the area, they just bolted off from there and one tank was left. Probably it didn't start. It had hardly 139 kms on the odometer; another brand

new tank was presented to us!

As I looked around, I found we were in the only grove within 500 yards of that area. I thought we were asking for trouble, it must be their DF-Arty task (defensive fire) so ordered my SHQ to move in to the open fields and camouflage themselves. I made the infantry take cover behind us. Sure enough, within 5 mins very heavy shelling came on us along with automatic fire. 10 minutes later, I was informed that we had sadly lost our RMO (Regimental Medical Officer) during that shelling. Shrapnel had pierced his intestines while he was injecting morphine to a wounded crewmember.

At the end of the day, we captured that crossroad. Of the infantry elements that had gone the other way, the CO, Coy Cdr, Battery Cdr were killed in action along with a number of casualties amongst the other ranks. Had we gone along with them, we would never have succeeded, we manoeuvred around the village. Pakis got unnerved and pulled out, as they didn't know how much armour had come behind them. Pagowai was captured and all infantry with our Sqn, returned intact!

The most remarkable job done by the Chief was firstly launching the Armd Div from Samba area and secondly, leaving 3rd CAV near Amritsar where Pak launched his Armd Div in Punjab. 3rd CAV was well positioned as the Armd Div was expected there. They were told to have a free run and skilfully created Patton Nagar, the largest graveyard of Patton Tanks in world history. Wherever Pakistan probed 3rd Cav, they were retaliated by Centurion fire. About 40-50 Pattons were decimated right there, all told about 90 Pattons were shattered at the Battle fields of Khem Karan - Asal Utar. That was the Indian Armoured Corps!

Lessons learnt were that we had superior training, crew integration (the man-machine mix), and very demanding peacetime gunnery training. Credit goes entirely to unsung heroes like each member of my Squadron, especially our gunners who held their nerve and shot those Pattons with great skill and determination. Knowing we were thoroughly out-gunned, they sat in their battle positions and waited for the right moment to press the trigger. Daffadar Om Prakash (Retired Hon'ble Capt) who was in the leading tank sought permission to abandon his tank when he was hit. I asked him if his main gun was operational. He

answered in the affirmative so I kept him engaged with the enemy, which he did with great élan. I assured him that his ammunition would be replenished as soon as it arrived. These were very good examples of our teamwork and dedication. That man destroyed his tank only when the battle was over and when its recovery was rendered impossible. All my troop leaders were wounded in battle or otherwise; our RMO laid down his life dispensing first aid under intense shelling. That was the spirit of Sixty Second Cavalry; we just didn't stop till the job was done! We just carried on...

Post-War Note:

The Squadron returned to garrisons with two Mention-in-Despatches for Sqn Cdr Maj KMKS Barach and No 2 Tp Ldr Nb Ris Sultan Singh. The CO Lt Col BM Singh received a COAS Commendation and a wound medal. Considering 5-6 Pattons, 1 Chaffee and half a battery destroyed, along with the capture of 2 working Pattons, 2 Jeeps with mounted radio sets, 4 X50 Browning MG, 6 X 30 Browning MG, one 3-inch mortar, one 3.5 inch Rocket Launcher and 12 assorted rifles, the Regiment received meagre recognition given the circumstances and pro-rata Patton destruction.

The names of killed in action are: Capt GN Yadur (RMO); Dfr Didar Singh; LDs: Santokh Singh, Surjit Singh and Sowars: Jawan Singh, Onkar Singh, Baldev Singh, Santokh Singh and Sher Singh. Amongst the wounded were Ris Fateh Singh; Nb Ris's: Shyam Lal, Sultan Singh and Shodan Singh; Dfrs: Shiv Charan Dass, Vijay Kumar; LD Dhian Singh, ALDs: Hawa Singh, Swaran Singh, Niranjan Singh; Sowars: Dayal Singh, Jagbir Singh; Craftsman Bharat Singh (LRW) and Sowar/Waiter TN Pradhan.

Lt Col DPS Warach, son of war time Sqn Cdr Maj Gen KMKS Barach, continued with the legacy of service to the Regiment. I am indeed grateful to Dr Ant Ram, a recent veteran of the Regiment for having introduced me to Hon'ble Capt Om Prakash Kadian. The spirit of camaraderie post retirement, speaks volumes of the Regiment.

The Regiment captured the tank of Commandant 10 GUIDES CAVALRY (Pakistan) and till this day use its muzzle brake as the base for 'The Pennant of Commandant Sixty Second Cavalry' ■



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